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## **Buddhism Inside the Newsroom: An Ethnographic Study of *DAAI TV***

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### **Abstract**

This ethnographic study aimed to explore the interrelationship between Buddhist values and journalism practice in *DAAI TV* Indonesia. The findings were derived from the fieldwork in the newsroom of *DAAI TV* throughout August 2019 to April 2020. In addition to participatory observation, the researcher also conducted several in-depth interviews and collected some documents, such as photos and journalists' handbook. The results revealed that Buddhism, especially which is taught by Master Cheng Yen as the founder of Tzu Chi, is reflected in the newsroom of *DAAI TV*. Furthermore, the journalism practice actualises the Buddhist-oriented journalism through *sammāvācā* (right speech), *sammākammanta* (right action), and *sammājjiva* (right livelihood). This study argues that *DAAI TV* has balanced the universal values of journalism to fit their own values.

Keywords: *DAAI TV, organisational culture, journalism, Buddhism, ethnography, newsroom*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Religious values play a significant role in journalism practice. Many researches have been conducted to present the argument that both personal and institutional religious beliefs may influence the way news is presented to the audience. In general, there are two important approaches in the study of relationship between religious values and journalism practice. One explores how the news media, with different religious ideology, produces or frames messages (Powell, 2018; Pratiwi, 2018; Susilo, 2016, Susilawati, 2015; Meizita, 2014; Kadewardana, 2008), while the other explores the impact of journalists' religiosity on their professional work (see Steele, 2011; Steele, 2018; Pintak, 2014; Chen, 2009; Underwood, 2009).

Many research findings concluded that religious values may bring deterioration in journalism. For instance, Chen (2009) finds that some Buddhist journalists in Taiwan tend to command the spirit of loyalty before professionalism while covering Buddhist events. Furthermore, Suryani & Priyonggo (2015) conclude that *VOA-Islam* is not objective in producing news about the demonstration against Ahok (Chinese Christian former

governor of Jakarta). Their finding is inline with the study of Susilo (2016), which shows that *Republika* (established by Muslim community) and *Suara Pembaruan* (established by Christian community) are not objective in covering a mosque burning in Papua.

On the other hand, there are also some researches which mentioned that religious values may encourage the journalists to fight for justice. For example, Steele (2011; 2012; 2018) argues that the teaching of Islam motivates the Muslim journalists in Indonesia and Malaysia to actualise "*amar makruf nahi munkar*" (commanding right, forbidding wrong) by supporting the marginalised people in their struggle against uncontrollable power of state or by reporting corruption among political elites. Therefore, Steele (2011) concludes that those practices are similar with the 'watchdog' role in Western journalism. Steele's finding shares a similar pattern with Pintak's survey (2014) toward Muslim journalists in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Arab countries. Pintak (2014) introduces that Muslim journalists in those countries still rest on journalism universal principles but they shape those to fit their own local beliefs.

Several news media in Indonesia are famous because of their religious background. For example, *Republika* is well-known because of its Islamic ideology and its direct affiliation with Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals) (Steele, 2018). While *Kompas* is recognised for its Catholic founders; as well as *Suara Pembaruan* is discussed because of its history and affiliation with Partai Kristen Indonesia (Christian Indonesian Party) (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008). In addition, there is also *DAAI TV* which is established by Yayasan Buddha Tzu Chi (Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation) (Tzu Chi, 2014).

This research will explore the interrelationship between Buddhist values and journalism practice in *DAAI TV* Indonesia. According to Merrill (in Pintak, 2013), exploring journalistic values outside the USA and Western Europe guides to the development that moves beyond the 'arrogant and ethnocentric' efforts by some US scholars to compel other journalistic culture to fit in the American ethics. There are two main reasons why *DAAI TV* is necessary to be studied. First, this media exists in the Muslim-majority country where the Buddhists are only about 0.72% of total population in Indonesia (BPS, 2010). Originally based in Taiwan, the TV station extended its operation in Indonesia in 2005 (Tzu Chi, 2014). To survive, *DAAI TV* does not only broadcast programmes about Buddhism and its organisation, but also other genres, such as current affairs and magazine; feature and documentary; talk show and variety show; motivation and spirituality; kids programme; as well as some based-on-true-story dramas. Additionally, *DAAI TV* also produces special programme throughout Ramadan (Islamic fasting month), which is *Harmoni Ramadan*. Second, this TV station is distinctive because it does not broadcast any violence, conflict, corruption, political issues, and crime. Meanwhile, these topics are common in news reporting. According to Andriani (2015), this happens because of the peace journalism principles in *DAAI TV*.

Study on the content of *DAAI TV* is actually done by several researchers, both in Taiwan and Indonesia (Liao, 2011; Liao, 2013; Andriani, 2015; Saputra, 2015; Frins, 2016). Therefore, this study will not focus on the contents but rather on the newsroom routine and its organisational values. Studying Buddhist values in the context of organisation is important. Brummans & Hwang (2010) stated that some researches have been conducted to show the advantages of implementing Buddhist values in the organisation. For instance, Brummans & Hwang (2010) revealed that Tzu Chi organisation members engage in voluntary programme seriously yet with ease and happiness. While Kernochan et al. (2007) found that compassion, mindfulness, and the no-self teaching of Buddhism make the learning process in the classroom be more effective and meaningful.

However, the investigation on how Buddhist values empirically affect the newsroom of media organisation and journalism practice is still relatively limited, particularly in the context of Muslim-majority country such as Indonesia. Thus, this research is done to fill this gap and to answer the question of (1) how Buddhist values shapes *DAAI TV* organisational culture; and (2) how their values are internalised through their journalistic practice?

The organisational culture theory by Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982) will be used. The word 'culture' in this theory is not just about ethnicity, race, or people's background. In the context of organisation, Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982) define culture as the way to live within an organisation which involves emotional and psychological atmosphere. Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982) state that organisational culture theory required the researchers to observe, record, and make sense of organisational members' communicative behaviour (West & Turner, 2010).

Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo advocate three assumptions in understanding organisational culture theory: (1) members of an organisation create and maintain a shared sense of organisation reality, making them understand more about the value of their organisation; (2) members of an organisation use and interpret symbols; and (3) organisational cultures and its interpretation of actions are diverse across organisation (West & Turner, 2010).

The first assumption emphasises the aspect of organisation's values. They define values as principles or standards that inform the members about what is important (in West & Turner, 2010). The second assumption highlights the use and the interpretation of verbal and nonverbal symbols that communicate organisation's values. While the third assumption focuses on the variety of organisational cultures.

The first and the second assumption of this theory are used in this current research to analyse *DAAI TV* values and how the members use and interpret verbal and nonverbal symbols to communicate their values. This is important to empirically claim that *DAAI TV*

is based on Buddhist values.

In the context of news media organisations, their values may influence the newsroom activity. For instance, Everbach (2006) concludes that women who lead *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* in the USA bring feminine values and their experiences as women into the newsroom, such as family-friendly policies, candour, collaboration, and communication. Therefore, it makes the employees feel satisfied and motivated because of the egalitarian work atmosphere. Another example comes from *Republika*. Steele (2018) reports that because of its Islamic values, *Republika* tends to focus more on Islamic political parties as well as topics that are related to Muslim community (Steele, 2018).

The concept of Buddhist-oriented journalism will be implemented to analyse *DAAI TV*'s journalistic activities. In fact, the discussion on Buddhism and journalism is strictly limited in the Muslim-majority country, such as Indonesia. Nevertheless, researches on Islam, media, and journalistic activity are enormous. There are 18 Islamic academic institutions in Indonesia that provide journalism education in the perspective of *dakwah* (Islamic propagation) (Steele, 2012).

Before elaborating the interrelationship between Buddhism and journalism, it is better to begin with a brief explanation about Buddhism itself. This belief originated in India and was firstly taught by Siddhartha Gautama. Gethin (1998) notes that as the time goes by, Buddhism is divided into three main traditions: *Theravada* (growing rapidly in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos); *Mahayana* (widely spread in China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam); and also *Vajrayana* (popular in Tibet, Mongolia, and Nepal).

Varley (2012) explains that generally the teaching of Buddhism can be summarised into four fundamental statements: (1) the reality of suffering; (2) the cause of suffering; (3) the cessation of suffering; and (4) the way to the cessation of suffering or is usually known as *ariya atthangika magga* (The Noble Eightfold Path). Additionally, Gunaratne (2009) describes that The Noble Eightfold Path consists of three dimensions: *pañña* (wisdom), *sila* (morality), and *samādhi* (concentration). *Pañña* (wisdom) dimension includes two paths: *sammāditthi* (right view) and *sammāsankappa* (right thought). *Sila* (morality) dimension involves three paths: *sammāvācā* (right speech), *sammākammanta* (right action), and *sammājīva* (right livelihood). *Samādhi* (concentration) dimension consists of three paths: *sammāvāyāma* (right effort), *sammāsati* (right mindfulness), and *sammāsamādhi* (right concentration) (Gunaratne, 2009).

McGill (2008) states that journalism which is based on Buddhist teaching would possess two characteristics. First, a journalism of healing because the purpose of Buddhism is realising the end of suffering. Buddhist-oriented journalism therefore is aimed at helping people solve their personal suffering and helping society heal the sorrow caused by injustice, resentment, exclusion, and physical violence. Second, a journalism of timely,

truthful, and helpful speech grounded in The Noble Eightfold Path.

Senarath (2015) asserts that *sila* (morality) dimension contains a set of ethics and morals for journalists to follow. In addition, Pearson & Senarath (2015) mention that the aspect of words, actions, and occupation in *sila* dimension supports the professional ethical codes for journalists, but these values stand in need of an articulated argument for their existence. They highlight that most of the international ethical codes of journalism practice were derived from Anglo-American approach. Therefore, Pearson & Senarath (2015) elaborate the relevance of *sila* dimension in the context of journalism practice. This current study attempts to explore Pearson & Senarath's elaboration of *sila* dimension in the context of *DAAI TV*.

## METHOD

This qualitative research employs interpretive paradigm with an ethnographic method. Basically, ethnographic method is used to describe and interpret the patterns of values, behaviours, beliefs, and language that are shared and learned in a particular culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2007). This method requires the researcher to conduct the study in the natural setting of the observed group (Fetterman, 2010), in this context, *DAAI TV* journalists. It means that researcher needs to live in and interact with the observed group for a certain period of time to scrutinise and learn their behaviour without any controlled settings.

To do so, the researcher conducted partial immersion of fieldwork (Delamont, 2007) from August 2019 to April 2020. Specifically, this kind of fieldwork enables researcher to oscillate between the site of the study, university, and home (Delamont, 2007). Throughout the fieldwork period, the researcher involved in *DAAI TV* internship programme and arranged some in-depth interviews with several journalists.

In the internship programme, the researcher was assigned to assist Current Affair and Magazine desk, particularly in *Halo Indonesia's* news programme. The researcher carried out participatory observation by engaging in daily conversation and news production activities, such as editorial meeting, news event coverage, composing news script, managing YouTube channel, as well as directing the floor. The researcher wrote down what was seen, heard, and experienced in a field note; collected the journalists' handbook; and also took some photos of the work area. The permission to use these data throughout the internship programme is legally received.

Some in-depth interviews with *DAAI TV* journalists were arranged. There are 7 informants who were interviewed: Paulus Florianus (programme manager), Zulfril Adha Putra (producer), Anthony Hongrizal (producer), Astia Dika (producer), Andrew Pakpahan (reporter), Prissilia Claudia (reporter), along with Reyhan as the representative of HRD

Department. They were chosen because they have worked in *DAAI TV* for more than a year. Additionally, each of them also comes from different social background, such as gender, ethnicity, and religion. The informants were interviewed in several occasion from March to April 2020. This was done to avoid similar answers at the same time. But, unfortunately, due to the pandemic situation and the regulation of *DAAI TV* during that period, the researcher was only allowed to conduct the interview through voice/video calls.

Finally, all the data were transcribed before being analysed by using inductive approach. The data were categorised into a set of themes. The themes were formulated on resemblances, associations, and dissimilarities over sets of data (Gibson & Brown, 2009).

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

*DAAI TV* is located in the area of Tzu Chi Center, North Jakarta, along with the office of Tzu Chi Foundation and Tzu Chi School. From the street, everyone can see obviously that there are three flags on the building's front yard: the national flag which stands in the middle of Tzu Chi flag and international Buddhist flag. The building architecture demonstrates oriental style, so does the lobby interior that is dominated with wood, bamboo, and some Chinese calligraphy works. Photographs of the Buddha and the founder Master Cheng Yen are hanging on some side of the wall. Several Buddhist-related miniatures, i.e. Borobudur Temple and Buddha sculpture, are displayed in some spots. All these reflect that *DAAI TV* is part of Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, which originated in Taiwan.

Precisely, it was on Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2019, when the researcher got into the newsroom for the first time to meet Reyhan, the HRD staff, for the internship briefing. While Reyhan was preparing the files, the researcher waited near a rattan table. By sitting there, the researcher could observe that journalists who work in *DAAI TV* are visibly heterogeneous. There are some women journalists who are wearing veil and also not all journalists are Chinese.

Despite of the fact that *DAAI TV* was established by Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, the members of this organisation come from different religion, race, and social background. There are 3 values that unite the organisation members, specifically (1) *gǎn ēn* or gratitude; (2) *zūn zhòng* or respect; and (3) *ài* or love. As what West & Turner (2010) mentioned, these values inform the members what is important. They become the direction for the members to do their professional job and daily interaction. Reyhan identifies the values as the ship that will carry the members to the same destination. Simultaneously, as mentioned in the second assumption of the organisational culture theory, organisational values are actualised through verbal and nonverbal communication.

Initially, the researcher will describe how *DAAI TV* journalists implement the first value, that is gratitude. Every morning, before starting the live broadcast at 9 a.m., the programme director always asks the floor director to lead the morning prayer. All crews in the studio and master control room pray in their own beliefs. According to the programme manager, Paulus Florianus, this activity symbolises gratitude and also the mutual respect because they are not forced to pray in a particular way.

In some occasion, the journalists often say “*gǎn ēn*” after helping each other. The email of acceptance that the researcher received from *DAAI TV* also mentioned the phrase “*gǎn ēn*” at the closing. Astia Dika, the producer of *DAAI Inspirasi* and *#SebarkanKebaikan*, said that basically, “*gǎn ēn*” means deeper than just “thank you”. However, the researcher occasionally still heard they expressed “thank you” with “*terima kasih*” or “*makasih*”.

How they convey gratitude is also reflected while eating. Every day at 12 p.m., they will stop their activity to have their lunch together at the canteen of Tzu Chi Center. This canteen only provides vegetarian food and beverages. All employee do not need to pay and they are allowed to scoop out the food by themselves. At the first day of researcher’s internship programme, the journalists reminded the researcher about the responsibility to eat up everything taken. This is how they show gratitude for their food. They said that it would be embarrassing if someone got caught throwing away their food into the rubbish bin.

Interestingly, not all journalists and employees are vegetarian. In contrast, Tzu Chi Center is a vegetarian zone. Thus, they have to obey the regulation for not bringing or consuming non-vegetarian food as long as they are still in the office. Besides, although the practice of vegetarianism is taught by Master Cheng Yen, the members of *DAAI TV* do not perceive this regulation as an effort to covert them into Buddhist.

As mentioned by Davidson (2003), among all Buddhist traditions, vegetarianism is only practised strictly by Mahayana monks and nuns. Although Buddhism exactly forbids killing, including animals, Buddha himself never compelled his disciples to be vegetarian. As mentioned in Tipitaka (Buddhist holy scripture), specifically in Majjhima Nikaya 55, Buddha allowed his disciples to consume meat only in three requirements: (1) not be seen; (2) not be heard; and (3) not be suspected that the animal have been slaughtered particularly to feed a monk. However, for the reason that Master Cheng Yen was ordained in Mahayana tradition (Huang, 2008), she and her disciples practise vegetarianism habitually.

Even though related to Mahayana Buddhism, the members of *DAAI TV* identify vegetarianism as part of healthy lifestyle and contribution to the green environment. “Vegetarianism is not bad. It leads someone to a healthier life, doesn’t it? So I respect this regulation. Not to mention, the food is also delicious!” the reporter, Prissilia Claudia (1<sup>st</sup>

April 2020), said while giggling.

“Vegetarianism looks like part of Buddhism because it is promoted by Master Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi volunteers. However, not all Buddhists are vegetarian, aren’t they? It has become a lifestyle or choice for someone. Which lifestyle would someone like to choose? So I do not think that it is related to Buddhism.” (Astia Dika, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2020)

“One of the philosophy in Tzu Chi it to love other beings. Vegetarianism is one of the way to actualise it. Besides that, by being vegetarian, we can protect the earth, contribute to the green environment, and also maintain health. Personally, I think it is beneficial. Not a problem.” (Paulus Florianus, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020)

The act of eating up cleanly and the interpretation of vegetarianism do not just happen spontaneously. It needs a process of socialisation. Astia Dika said that the journalists need to know the advantages of vegetarianism because they are expected to promote it to the society.

The second organisational value is respect. This is expressed through compassionate communication. Although anger and disappointment may arise in a teamwork, but everything needs to be delivered without using harsh words. There was a moment when Zulfril, the producer, asked the researcher to come to his desk. He said that the researcher’s news script was not proportional. He pointed out what was not clear and asked the researcher to revise. That instruction was given without any intimidating words.

Asking reporters to come to his desk and revise their news script is a normal scene. But, Prissilia said that the way the producer deliver the command is different. She explained that her friends in other news media are used to face cruel treatment from their boss, with the argument that “journalists should have strong mentality”. Zulfril explained why everything should be delivered politely. Basically, it is because every human being does not want to be treated rudely. Besides, harsh words are not always effective. Even worse, it could make the reporters grumbling at him. Anthony, the producer of *DAAI Mandarin*, agrees with Zulfril. If he finds out that the reporters make any mistakes, he will approach them personally for discussion. Astia Dika also implements this method. She said that problem can only be solved with “heart to heart approach”.

Furthermore, the value of respect is visible through their appearance. The journalists have to wear a complete uniform with formal trousers not only when they are in the newsroom, but also in the field. Male journalists in *DAAI TV* are not allowed to lengthen their hair, moustache, and beard. While the female journalists are not allowed to colour their hair and nails, neither are they allowed to apply luxurious makeup and accessories.

All these are strictly regulated by the organisation. Reyhan, the HRD staff, said that this aims to establish humble, polite, and presentable journalists because they represent the organisation, especially when they work in the field or cover social events. For Prissilia, the one who works mostly in the field, this regulation makes her always ready to meet people. Additionally, Reyhan mentioned that the regulation of how they should dress up is rooted from the Master Cheng Yen's moderation.

No footwear is allowed inside the building of Tzu Chi Center. The security who is in charge at the lobby will ask politely all guests that come to or are invited to *DAAI TV* to take off their footwear. They may carry their footwear by bags that are intentionally provided. Otherwise, they may leave their footwear at the shoe rack. According to Reyhan, this is intended to keep the building clean and to respect the janitors.

Subsequently, love is the third organisational value. It controls how the journalists and the employees express concerns to each other. Teasing with jokes is the simplest example. Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher observed that in some occasions, the journalists were participating in jokes to make the newsroom more alive. Andrew, the reporter, said that jokes just flow spontaneously when they are not really hectic. In contrast, Andrew asserted that they will be serious if it is needed. Prissilia mentioned that teasing the team with jokes is the way to support each other. Meanwhile, Astia Dika said that no one would forbid joking as long as it did not disturb the job. "We cannot feel the warmth if we do not bond as a family," Astia said.

The editorial meeting in *Halo Indonesia* is performed in a relaxed atmosphere. Every Thursday at 3 p.m, the meeting is held regularly in the library and led by Zulfril. Some reporters sit on sofa and some on floor. They plan the agenda for tomorrow's Friday until one week ahead. Zulfril also uses this moment as a group sharing session. For instance, Zulfril ever asked the reporters to share their experiences covering Tzu Chi's voluntary events. At the end, he advised the reporters to be willing to help Tzu Chi's volunteers if their journalistic tasks are done.

On Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019, Riska, the new reporter, joined the *Halo Indonesia's* team. The way the senior reporters introduced her to their daily tasks also reflects the love value. For example, Prissilia accompanied Riska to go to the master control room and introduced her to the work flow as a PIC. In *Halo Indonesia's* desk, PIC refers to a reporter who just stays at the newsroom to manage the daily broadcast for a week. The PIC is responsible to contact guests for the daily talk show segment, prepare the daily rundown, arrange the questions list for talk show segment, collect the news script from the other reporters, and manage the transportation for the other's field duty. The senior reporters also taught the researcher a lot of things during the fieldwork: writing news script, recording voice over, editing video thumbnail, as well as directing the floor. Besides joking, teaching is their love language.

Their love value is not only shared to the other members of *DAAI TV*, but also more, to the whole human beings. The researcher observed that each journalist has a cylinder bamboo-like moneybox on their own desk. The money they donate to the moneybox will be collected regularly and used for charity and philanthropic programme that is organised by Tzu Chi Foundation.

This bamboo-like moneybox has its own story related to the initiation of Tzu Chi in Taiwan. According to their website (Tzu Chi, n.d.), Master Cheng Yen and her five disciples distributed the bamboo-like moneybox to some houses. The money they collected then be used for helping the poor. This movement attracted more and more people to participate. Finally, in May, 1966, the social organisation of Tzu Chi was established with the spirit of “small donation, great merit”.

The charity through bamboo-like moneybox is related the *bodhisattva*'s excellence. Literally, *bodhisattva* means ‘enlightenment beings’ (Varley, 2012). In Mahayana Buddhism, a *bodhisattva* is perceived as a figure who takes a vow to help others along the path to realise the enlightenment. There are six values of a *bodhisattva*'s excellence: *dana* (generosity), *sila* (morality), *kshanti* (patience), *virya* (diligence), *dhyana* (concentration), and *prajna* (wisdom) (Varley, 2012). Specifically, this philanthropic movement reflects the *dana* (generosity).

Master Cheng Yen's influence is not only reflected inside the organisation, but also through the TV screen and journalistic activities. For instance, *DAAI TV* does not broadcast any scene which presents non-vegetarian culinary. Once, the researcher ever suggested to cover a culinary festival. But, Media, the reporter, argued that covering culinary festival is risky. The pictures would be monotonous because not all the food is vegetarian food.

Fundamentally, journalism practice in *DAAI TV* rests on the motto of “truth, virtue, and aesthetics”. It means that any information that contains only truth will not be published by *DAAI TV*. A fire incident that happened on Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019 in Cawang, East Jakarta will be a good example to explain this practice. In the editorial meeting on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019, Zulfril asked Riska the new reporter to cover that fire incident. Everyone knows that the fire incident was a factual event. However, Zulfril asserted that incident coverage in *DAAI TV* should not focus on the sorrow, victims, and the damage. He said that *DAAI TV* must evoke optimism. Therefore, Zulfril required Riska to report what kind of help that the residents had got and what was still needed. Moreover, the visual is not allowed to exploit their misery.

The researcher was the person who recorded the voice over script. When Riska's news

story was broadcasted, there was no crying or chaotic scene. Instead, the visual showed the environment around the shelter post, food distribution, children's activity, as well as the arrival of a mobile public library bus. Some scenes showed the ruined building to demonstrate the current situation. In the very first minute of the news story, the scene presented a resident who was being interviewed and expressing his gratitude to the benefactors and volunteers. The resident mentioned some obtained helps and also the specific support that was still desired. This information could invite other volunteer to help and donate.

From this case, the event itself is truth. What makes the truth is worth to be reported because it provides a chance to help. This also explains the second element of their motto, that is virtue. According to *DAAI TV* journalists' handbook, virtue means everything that brings good impact. It means that the journalists are required to present information which contains kindness, inspiration, manners, optimism, positive behaviour, stimulus to commit good, morality, and virtuous character. Implicitly, everything that is related to crimes, corruption, gossip, sexual scandal, demonstration, and political issues are out of this standard.

By performing virtue as their motto, it is just like "killing two birds with one stone". It means that on one side the journalists commit their responsibility to share information to the society, but on the other side, they also make merit through two conditions: (1) they help the society by publishing their problem; (2) they provide a chance for the audience to participate doing good by helping others. Prissilia has her own story. She told the researcher that once she has ever covered a story of a female driver of *ojek* (motorcycle taxi). The driver always brought her child while transporting passengers. One day, someone contacted *DAAI TV* after watching the news story. It turns out that the person owns a daycare. The person offered a help and allowed the driver to leave her child at the daycare without any charge.

Andrew, the reporter, said that helping people can be done both directly and indirectly. Paulus has a similar point of view. He likened the journalist to a priest. He said that a priest can only evoke people who come to the church to commit good, but a journalist through mass media can evoke more people to do the same. For Paulus, it would be a merit for him if he could produce inspiring news that motivate people to help others.

This finding is in line with Steele's work (2011). For Muslim journalists in Indonesia and Malaysia, they perceive their journalistic activity as a part of the command from the Quran, that is "*amar makruf nahi munkar*" (commanding right, forbidding wrong). Even some journalists in Steele's finding described their practice as prophetic journalism, which refers to the characteristic of Prophet Muhammad: honest, reliable, intelligent, and bringing the messages from Allah (Mahfud, 2014). Basically, prophetic journalism means an effort to tell the unpleasant truth about the society just as prophets that opposed

injustice and corruption (Steele, 2012).

However, what makes *DAAI TV* different is because the journalists do not interpret their practice according to their own personal religious beliefs. They explained their responsibility from the same basis: the motto of *DAAI TV*, especially the 'virtue' aspect.

The last motto, the aesthetics, is actualised through how they shoot the scenes. They are not allowed to exploit the sorrow. Specifically, *DAAI TV* journalists' handbook defines the aesthetics as something that brings happiness, harmony, social order, love, collaboration, responsibility, ethics, and amusement through the use of language, voice, and visual image.

Furthermore, how *DAAI TV* criticises the government is not as straightforward as other media. For instance, on Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019, *Halo Indonesia* invited Husnin, a resident of Kampung Muara Baru, and Nirwono Joga, an academic, to their talk show segment. They discussed land subsidence phenomenon that happened in North Jakarta. Husnis got the first chance to tell what he felt as someone who lived near an embankment in North Jakarta. He reported that the water level almost reached the top of the embankment. Nirwono got the second chance. He explained why this could happen: massive groundwater extraction, mega construction project, and the land type in this area. Then, Nirwono recommended two ideas: (1) the government should stop using groundwater; and (2) the government should relocate the residents near the embankment as soon as possible.

The researcher thought that this segment was an attempt to be loyal to the public as what Kovach & Rosenstiel (2007) pointed out as elements of journalism. Besides, through this segment, *DAAI TV* also provides a forum for public discussion as well as conducts journalism role as a watchdog. Nevertheless, they do not implement this practice in a cynical way, in order to uphold their motto, especially the 'aesthetics' that commands harmony, social order, love, collaboration, etc. As the programme manager who acts out the role of editor-in-chief in *DAAI TV*, Paulus said that they do not just criticise but they give solution. Moreover, he mentioned that he does not prefer using the word 'criticise' because it sounds harsh, that is avoided. Therefore, he highlighted the word 'suggestion'.

In contrast to Steele's finding where the journalists mentioned some Islamic phrase to explain their responsibility, this current study revealed that all informants did not mention any religious phrase to explain what they do. Specifically, no informants refer to Tipitaka. But, interestingly, according to the researcher's analysis and interpretation, the practice of journalism in *DAAI TV* actualises Buddhist-oriented journalism. Pearson & Senarath (2015) elaborate that in the context of morality, Buddhist-oriented journalism can be actualised through *sammāvācā* (right speech), *sammākammanta* (right action), and *sammājjīva* (right livelihood).

Truth is a substantial thing for *DAAI TV* journalists. Their handbook mentioned that information which contains 'truth' should be actual, contextual, clear, covering both/all sides, and valid both epistemologically and semantically. Therefore, the journalists must verify each information before reporting it to the audience. They perceive verification in the same way the other journalists do. But, more importantly, this matches the elements of *sammāvācā* (right speech) as proposed by Pearson & Senarath (2015). In the context of *Abhayarājakumāra Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikaya* 58 (Thanissaro, 1997), Buddha himself would never deliver information that was unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial, not liked by others, and disagreeable. Even when the information was true, factual, liked by other, and agreeable, but had no advantages, Buddha would also not express it. The researcher argues that this is why *DAAI TV* does not broadcast any gossip or infotainment because those programmes only provide unverified rumours and have no correlation with the public interest. Paulus, the programme manager, explained that gossip or infotainment could be true but it has no virtue. Thus, gossip or infotainment is not in line with their motto.

Pearson & Senarath (2015) explain that based on *Samyutta Nikaya* 45.8, right action means abstaining from killing, stealing, and unchastity. They argue that media contents that are based on Buddhist values should not present these three aspects. They believe that media contents could encourage audience to do the same. The researcher argues that this is the background why *DAAI TV* does not present any crimes coverage or sexual scandal. Paulus mentioned that crime coverage, same as gossip, has no virtue and aesthetics elements. The journalists are also not allowed to commit murder, thievery, and sexual abuse because such things may lead them to the police. In the context of using other's visual material or data, the journalists are required to mention clearly the original source.

The last aspect of Buddhist morality is right livelihood. Generally, it discusses appropriate jobs. Pearson & Senarath (2015) explain that, based on *Samyutta Nikaya* 45.8, appropriate job does not involve dishonesty and wrong livelihood. In *Anguttara Nikaya* 5.1777 (Access to Insight, 2013), Buddha explained that there are five inappropriate jobs: trafficking of human beings, weapons, meat, intoxicants, and poisons. Definitely, being a journalist is not categorised as an inappropriate job. In the context of *DAAI TV*, it is clearly mentioned in their handbook that all journalists have to obey the journalism ethics and law. It is strictly regulated that they are not allowed to collect money or any expensive stuffs as their compensation. The researcher perceives this as the attempt to avoid the abuse of professional status.

In addition, Gunaratne (2009) suggests that Buddhist-oriented journalism should not depend on profit and commercials as their income. He says that dependency on

commercials may raise *tanhā* (desire), the source of *dukkha* (suffering). He proposes the implementation of public-supported funding programme. Surprisingly, this is also done by *DAAI TV* through the strategy of “Sahabat DAAI” (Friends of DAAI). Because there are no commercial ads in *DAAI TV*, they invite the society to contribute as donators. Paulus mentioned that “Sahabat DAAI” is intended to encourage more people to watch and support *DAAI TV* through donation.

Although realising Buddhist-oriented journalism, *DAAI TV* does not name their practice as it is. They decide to name their practice as “humanitarian journalism”, precisely as mentioned in their journalists’ handbook. *DAAI TV* defines humanitarian journalism as the activity which is based on journalism principles and humanity in delivering clear, meaningful, and optimistic information for a better character change. The study of Huang (2008) may help explaining this phenomenon. Huang (2008) reports that even though it was founded by a Buddhist nun, Tzu Chi annual gathering in Taiwan was not talking about religious activities, such as chanting, meditation, or charismatic healing, but rather about secular work, such as recycling garbage and voluntary programme. However, Huang (2008) states that the essence is still perceived as a way to become a *bodhisattva*. Parallel with Huang’s finding, this research argues that *DAAI TV* prefers using secular phrase to religious phrase.

## CONCLUSION

Buddhist values, especially which are taught by Master Cheng Yen, is reflected through their organisational culture and journalistic activity. From eating vegetarian food to delivering true, helpful, and inspiring information, all of them are related to Buddhism. However, the journalists do not explain what they do by using religious phrase, neither do they refer to Buddhism. They talked in the same basis: the motto of *DAAI TV* journalism practice.

Telling the truth is essential for every press institution. But, each media has their own way to construct truth. According to Pintak (2014), truth is contextual, shaped by social and political atmosphere where the journalists work. Similarly, Hanitzsch (2007) mentions that for those who believe in subjectivism, they agree on the notion that there is no objective news. For *DAAI TV*, telling truth is a must, but not all truth should be reported. They only deliver truth that is beneficial, inspiring, optimistic, and other criteria that meets the element of virtue and aesthetics. To do so, they apply the discipline of verification.

This TV station also provides a forum for public discussion and acts out the role as the ‘watchdog’. But, the journalists perform such things in their own way, not as cynical and straightforward as other media. The purpose is to uphold the element of ‘aesthetics’ that requires harmony, social order, love, collaboration, etc.

Besides truth and power control, the other journalistic value is independency. According to Akhavan-Majid (in Gutsche Jr. & Salkin, 2011), independency is the editorial autonomy to be free from the intervention of the government and business institutions. The researcher argues that *DAAI TV* is independent from the government and business interest because they do not deliver any political issues, neither do they rely on commercial ads. In order to be sustainable, they invite the participation from the society through “Sahabat DAAI”. Nevertheless, *DAAI TV* cannot be really independent from the religious institution, Tzu Chi. It is just because *DAAI TV* is owned by Tzu Chi and be a part of its humanitarian mission. According to Zulfril, there are no media which can be totally independent from the owner. He asserted that the intervention is actualised through the obligation to broadcast kindness-only contents.

Overall, this research reveals that *DAAI TV* has adapted the universal values of journalism, specifically truth, power control, as well as independency, and adjusted those to fit their own Buddhist-oriented journalism. This finding supports Pintak’s argument (2013) that journalistic norms are contextual, constructed by global standards and local values such as culture, religion, and political atmosphere.

However, due to the focus on journalism practice, this ethnographic research does not explore *DAAI TV* as a whole. The next researcher may study the interrelationship between Buddhist values in *DAAI TV* and other aspects, such as media management, business model, PR & marketing strategy, job satisfaction, religious literacy, and so on. Additionally, this study also has limitation in describing the dependency between *DAAI TV* and Tzu Chi Foundation. The next researcher may use different methods, theories, or concepts to explore this dependency deeper, such as media hegemony and mediatisation of religion.

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